

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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Attorney General Racine Likens District's Struggle for Autonomy with Haitians' Victories over Colonialism in Speech

Attorney General Delivers Keynote Address to Haitian Lawyers Association Gala

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine was the keynote speaker this weekend for the Haitian Lawyers Association's 17th Annual Scholarship Gala and Awards Ceremony in Miami. The organization – which has previously given Mr. Racine its Leadership Award – promotes excellence, professionalism, equality and diversity in the legal profession as well as the general welfare of the Haitian-American community and other minority residents.

The Attorney General, who is Haitian American, linked Haiti's historic independence from French colonial rule with the District of Columbia's struggle for voting rights and autonomy.

"Our Haitian ancestors threw off the oppressive yoke of slavery and colonial rule in favor of freedom and democracy more than two centuries ago, and the United States settled the question of slavery's legality a century and a half ago," Attorney General Racine said. **"But the 660,000 residents of the District of Columbia continue to lack any voting representation in Congress, and we must submit all of our local laws and our local budget to Congress for its review. It is long past time for the residents of the nation's capital to enjoy the full blessings of democracy."**

Racine further highlighted the impressive rise of Haitian-American elected public officials in the United States and implored current and future leaders not to seek public office with the objective of "being someone," but rather "doing something" by committing to serve others and assist our most vulnerable communities.

The Attorney General urged the audience to embrace the responsibilities that leadership bestows, including investment in the development of a new generation of Haitian-American leaders. Racine made the case for Haitian-American leaders to fight injustice wherever it exists, especially the illegal deprivation of basic human rights resulting from the Dominican Republic's harsh laws denying Dominican residents of Haitian descent rights to citizenship and the protection of law.

“Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said that ‘Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,’”
Attorney General Racine said. **“Given our people’s history, Haitian Americans should be particularly vigilant to bear witness to, and advocate against, injustices such as those we see in the Dominican Republic.”**

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